

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION

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ANTONIO VALLIN BRIDGES, )  
                              )  
Plaintiff,               ) Case No. 1:05-cv-624  
                              )  
v.                         ) Honorable Robert Holmes Bell  
                              )  
JOHN RUBITSCHUN et al., )  
                              )  
Defendants.              )  
\_\_\_\_\_

**OPINION**

This is a civil rights action brought by a state prisoner pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

The Court has granted Plaintiff leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*, and Plaintiff has paid the initial partial filing fee. Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act, PUB. L. No. 104-134, 110 STAT. 1321 (1996) (PLRA), the Court is required to dismiss any prisoner action brought under federal law if the complaint is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2), 1915A; 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c). The Court must read Plaintiff's *pro se* complaint indulgently, *see Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972), and accept Plaintiff's allegations as true, unless they are clearly irrational or wholly incredible. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 33 (1992). Applying these standards, the Court will dismiss Plaintiff's complaint for failure to state a claim.

## **Discussion**

### I. Factual allegations

Plaintiff is incarcerated in the Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility. He pleaded guilty in the Ingham County Circuit Court to assault with intent to commit a felony. On September 15, 2004, the court sentenced him to imprisonment for twenty-one months to ten years.

In his *pro se* complaint, Plaintiff sues Parole Board Members Miguel Berrios and John Rubitschun, and Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) Director Patricia Caruso. Plaintiff first claims that he was denied parole in violation of his due process rights. While his allegations are difficult to follow, Plaintiff asserts that the Michigan Parole Board relied upon inaccurate information in making its parole decision without giving him an opportunity to challenge or correct the inaccuracies. Plaintiff also disputes the parole board's recommendation that he participate in a Sex Offender Program (SOP) because he was charged but never convicted of a sex offense and such treatment was not recommended following his evaluation at the Reception and Guidance Center (RGC). In addition, Plaintiff claims that he was inappropriately given an RGC designation of having a history of sexual assault. As a result of the designation, Plaintiff is not eligible for a community residential placement program. See MICH. DEP'T. OF CORR., Policy Directive 06.03.101(C)(2).

For relief, Plaintiff seeks "to sue all Defendant [sic] for damages compensatory, nominal and punitive, injunctive and a declaratory judgment."

### II. Failure to state a claim

A complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted when it is clear that no relief could be granted under any set of facts that could be proved consistent with the

allegations of the complaint. *Jones v. City of Carlisle*, 3 F.3d 945, 947 (6th Cir. 1993). To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege the violation of a right secured by the federal Constitution or laws and must show that the deprivation was committed by a person acting under color of state law. *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988); *Street v. Corr. Corp. of Am.*, 102 F.3d 810, 814 (6th Cir. 1996). Because § 1983 is a method for vindicating federal rights, not a source of substantive rights itself, the first step in an action under § 1983 is to identify the specific constitutional right allegedly infringed. *Albright v. Oliver*, 510 U.S. 266, 271 (1994).

Plaintiff claims that he was denied parole in violation of his due process rights. A challenge to the fact or duration of confinement should be brought as a petition for habeas corpus and is not the proper subject of a civil rights action brought pursuant to § 1983. See *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 484, 493 (1973) (the essence of habeas corpus is an attack by a person in custody upon the legality of that custody and the traditional function of the writ is to secure release from illegal custody). The Supreme Court has held that a state prisoner cannot make a cognizable claim under § 1983 for an alleged unconstitutional conviction or for “harm caused by actions whose unlawfulness would render a conviction or sentence invalid” unless a prisoner shows that the conviction or sentence has been “reversed on direct appeal, expunged by executive order, declared invalid by a state tribunal authorized to make such determination, or called into question by a federal court’s issuance of a writ of habeas corpus.” *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994); see also *Edwards v. Balisok*, 520 U.S. 641, 646-48 (1997). However, in *Wilkinson v. Dotson*, 125 S. Ct. 1242, 1247 (2005), the Supreme Court clarified that §1983 remains available to a state prisoner for procedural challenges where success in the action would not necessarily spell immediate or speedier release for the prisoner. Assuming that Plaintiff’s action is cognizable under § 1983, it fails to state a claim as set forth below.

Plaintiff fails to state a due process claim arising from the denial of his parole because he has no liberty interest in being released on parole. There is no constitutional or inherent right to be conditionally released before the expiration of a prison sentence. *Greenholtz v. Inmates of Neb. Penal & Corr. Complex*, 442 U.S. 1, 7 (1979). Although a state may establish a parole system, it has no duty to do so, and thus, the presence of a parole system by itself does not give rise to a constitutionally-protected liberty interest in parole release. *Id.* at 7; *Bd. of Pardons v. Allen*, 482 U.S. 369, 373 (1987). Rather, a liberty interest is present only if state law entitles an inmate to release on parole. *Inmates of Orient Corr. Inst. v. Ohio State Adult Parole Auth.*, 929 F.2d 233, 235 (6th Cir. 1991).

In *Sweeton v. Brown*, 27 F.3d 1162, 1164-65 (6th Cir. 1994) (en banc), the Sixth Circuit, noting “the broad powers of the Michigan procedural authorities to deny parole,” has held that the Michigan system does not create a liberty interest in parole. Subsequent to its 1994 decision, the Sixth Circuit has recognized the continuing validity of *Sweeton* and has continued to find that Michigan’s parole scheme creates no liberty interest in being released on parole. See *Ward v. Stegall*, No. 03-1804, 2004 WL 614581 (6th Cir. March 24, 2004); *Martin v. Ohio Adult Parole Auth.*, No. 03-3642, 2003 WL 22976604, at \*1 (6th Cir. Dec. 8, 2003); *Bullock v. McGinnis*, No. 00-1591, 2001 WL 180978, at \*2 (6th Cir. Feb. 14, 2001); *Turnboe v. Stegall*, No. 00-1182, 2000 WL 1679478, at \*1 (6th Cir. Nov. 1, 2000); *Hawkins v. Abramajtys*, No. 99-1995, 2000 WL 1434695, at \*2 (6th Cir. Sept. 19, 2000); *Irvin v. Michigan Parole Bd.*, No. 99-1817, 2000 WL 800029, at \*2 (6th Cir. June 14, 2000); *Clifton v. Gach*, No. 98-2239, 1999 WL 1253069, at \*1 (6th Cir. Dec. 17, 1999).

Also, in unpublished decisions, the Sixth Circuit has held that particular parts of Michigan's statutory parole scheme do not create a liberty interest in parole. *See Fifer v. Michigan Dep't of Corr.*, No. 96-2322, 1997 WL 681518, at \*1 (6th Cir. Oct. 30, 1997); *Moran v. McGinnis*, No. 95-1330, 1996 WL 304344, at \*2 (6th Cir. June 5, 1996); *Leaphart v. Gach*, No. 95-1639, 1995 WL 734480, at \*2 (6th Cir. Dec. 11, 1995); *Vertin v. Gabry*, No. 94-2267, 1995 WL 613692, at \*1 (6th Cir. Oct. 18, 1995); *Neff v. Johnson*, No. 92-1818, 1993 WL 11880, at \*1 (6th Cir. Jan. 21, 1993); *Janiske v. Michigan Dep't of Corr.*, No. 91-1103, 1991 WL 76181, at \*1 (6th Cir. May 9, 1991); *Haynes v. Hudson*, No. 89-2006, 1990 WL 41025, at \*1 (6th Cir. Apr. 10, 1990). Finally, the Michigan Supreme Court has recognized that there is no liberty interest in parole under the Michigan system. *Glover v. Michigan Parole Bd.*, 596 N.W.2d 598, 603-04 (Mich. 1999). Because Plaintiff has no liberty interest at stake, he fails to state a claim for a violation of his procedural due process rights in his parole proceedings.<sup>1</sup>

Plaintiff also alleges that his due process rights were violated when he was inappropriately given an RGC designation of having a history of sexual assault. As a result of the designation, Plaintiff is not eligible for a community residential placement program. See MICH. DEP'T. OF CORR., Policy Directive 06.03.101(C)(2). Plaintiff has no constitutional right to any particular placement or security classification. “[A]n inmate has no justifiable expectation that he

<sup>1</sup>Defendants Rubitschun and Berrios also are immune from Plaintiff's claim for monetary damages. Members of a parole board have absolute immunity from damages liability for actions taken in the performance of their duties regarding the decision to grant or deny parole because that task is functionally comparable to that of a judge. *Hawkins v. Morse*, No. 98-2062, 1999 WL 1023780, at \*1 (6th Cir. Nov. 4, 1999); *Tillman v. Price*, No. 96-2032, 1997 WL 225993, at \*1 (6th Cir. May 5, 1997); *Ward v. Moss*, No. 94-1417, 1994 WL 664948, at \*1 (6th Cir. Nov. 23, 1994); accord *Scotto v. Almenas*, 143 F.3d 105, 110 (2d Cir. 1998); *Wilson v. Kelkhoff*, 86 F.3d 1438, 1444 (7th Cir. 1996); *Anton v. Getty*, 78 F.3d 393, 396 (8th Cir. 1996); *Little v. Bd. of Pardons, and Parole Div.*, 68 F.3d 122, 123 (5th Cir. 1995) (per curiam); *Russ v. Uppah*, 972 F.2d 300, 303 (10th Cir. 1992). The actions for which Plaintiff complains were taken by Defendant parole board members in their quasi-judicial function of deciding whether to grant or deny Plaintiff's parole; therefore, they are entitled to absolute immunity.

will be incarcerated in any particular prison within a State.” *Olim v. Wakinekona*, 461 U.S. 238, 245 (1983); *see also Moody v. Daggett*, 429 U.S. 78, 88 n.9 (1976). A change in security classification to a higher level of security, with nothing more, is not the type of atypical and significant deprivation in which an inmate might have a liberty interest. *See Sandin v. Conner*, 515 U.S. 472, 486 (1995); *Rimmer-Bey v. Brown*, 62 F.3d 789, 790-791 (6th Cir. 1995); *Mackey v. Dyke*, 111 F.3d 460 (6th Cir. 1997). The Sixth Circuit has specifically held that “the denial of participation in a community placement program is not the type of atypical and significant deprivation in which the state might create a liberty interest.” *Davis v. Loucks*, No. 96-1583, 1997 WL 215517, at \*1 (6th Cir. Apr. 29, 1997)(citing *Sandin v. Conner*, 515 U.S. 472). In the absence of a recognized liberty interest, Plaintiff’s RCG designation raises no issue of constitutional magnitude. Plaintiff, therefore, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

### **Conclusion**

Having conducted the review now required by the Prison Litigation Reform Act, the Court determines that Plaintiff’s action fails to state a claim and will therefore be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b), and 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c).

The Court must next decide whether an appeal of this action would be in good faith within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3). *See McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 611 (6th Cir. 1997). For the same reasons that the Court dismisses the action, the Court discerns no good-faith basis for an appeal. Should Plaintiff appeal this decision, the Court will assess the \$255 appellate filing fee pursuant to § 1915(b)(1), *see McGore*, 114 F.3d at 610-11, unless Plaintiff is barred from proceeding *in forma pauperis*, e.g., by the “three-strikes” rule of § 1915(g). If he is barred, he will be required to pay the \$255 appellate filing fee in one lump sum.

This is a dismissal as described by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).

A Judgment consistent with this Opinion will be entered.

Date: October 18, 2005

/s/ Robert Holmes Bell  
ROBERT HOLMES BELL  
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE